

# The Unio Mystica as a Theological Conception

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IN recent years a tendency has been shown on the part of some prominent theologians to question, if not the Christian character of the “mystic union,” at all events its value as a doctrinal concept. Professor Denney, who has been one of the most unrelenting critics of Ritschlianism in this country, joins with Ritschl in protesting that the idea is one of which we should do well to clear our minds, and has expressed something like gratitude that the phrase is not to be found in the New Testament.<sup>1</sup> What Ritschl complains of is the sentimental associations of the phrase, and the ease with which those who employ it rise superior to the idea of

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<sup>1</sup> EXPOSITOR, Oct. 1903, p. 256.

justification through trust in the historic Christ;<sup>2</sup> what Dr. Denney finds unsatisfactory is the way in which the term "mystical," suggestive rather of that which has not yet reached the moral level, such as the union of nature with God, is brought in to describe something which professedly transcends moral relations.<sup>3</sup> Both writers, on grounds of the sort I have indicated, make 139 no use of the idea in their theological constructions, not altogether, as it appears to me, to the advantage of the whole.

It is of course impossible to deny that good cause for these complaints, or for at least some part of them, is furnished by the language in which orthodox writers of the post-Reformation period felt free to indulge. Thus we read in a standard work that the Unio Mystica "is the action of the Holy Spirit, whereby the *substance* of believers is joined, most closely, though without intermixture, to the *substance* of the Holy Trinity and the flesh of Christ."<sup>4</sup> The conjunction is elsewhere characterized as "special" and "intrinsic"; it is set forth as being a case of consubstantiality, two essences becoming one; although it is only fair to say that this is usually followed up by an explicit repudiation of Pantheism. One can see elements in such a description which were sure to offend a later age. Take the use of the term "substance." This was the

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<sup>2</sup> *Justification and Reconciliation* (Eng. Trans.), p. 112.

<sup>3</sup> EXPOSITOR, Feb. 1904, p. 155 ff.

<sup>4</sup> König; quoted by Rothe, *Dogmatik*, zweiter Theil, zweite Abtheilung, p. 250.

category, of course, by which writers of that day indicated the highest degree of reality; it was indeed their loftiest idea of God Himself. Nothing so adequate or exalted could be said of Him as that He was the ultimate or universal Substance. In moments of personal devotion, no doubt, this idea was put aside; for no one can really pray to a substance; but when a need was felt for the intellectual definitions of the text-books, it was resorted to unsuspiciously once more. This being so, it is not surprising that men should have spoken of a substantial union of man to God. A substantial union was the deepest and most real that the human mind could imagine; it seemed to have in it a secret or inexpressible somewhat far transcending all conscious ethical relations, with an intimacy and intensity to which ethical words fail to do justice. But it would be generally felt now that if the term is taken in its highest sense, no relation can be more intimate or intense than an ethical one; or at least that the deepest and most passionate experiences do not cease to be also ethical. And even those who feel that they need the word "mystic" do not, or at least ought not to, mean by it anything which is defined by contrast with "ethical," but rather, I think, ethical relations of a kind more profoundly intimate than any that obtain between one man and another. 140

It is, therefore, no argument against the reality of the mystic union, or its value for the interpretation of Christian truth, that people used once to describe it by conceptions which are now felt to be inadequate. To be de-

scribed at first by inadequate conceptions has been the lot of most great things. Even if writers of the seventeenth century made the union of the believer and the Lord a "substantial" one—existing between two mysterious impersonal substances—even if they held, at all events in some cases, that the flesh of the believer and the flesh of Christ are mysteriously united and identified, this ought not to deter us from seeking a more worthy interpretation of the real fact they had in view. There was a day when it was thought a sufficient definition of electricity to say that it is a property of amber; that early idea indeed settled how the new phenomenon should be named; but no one now receives that description as sufficient, or, because it is obsolete, holds that electricity does not exist. What we have to do, therefore, in regard to our present subject, is to put aside the category of "substance," and try to think out the matter in terms of personality. On the accepted principle of modern philosophy that there are degrees of reality, a personal union must be regarded as infinitely more real than a "substantial" one.

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It is well to recall the fact, however, that the conception of a mystic union is one that in no way depends upon the authority, be it great or small, of post-Reformation systems of theology. Its roots go much deeper in spiritual life, as well as much farther back in Christian history. If the phrase is not in the New Testament, the thing is on every page of St. Paul and St. John. Take for example a startling sentence like that

of St. Paul in 1 Corinthians vi. 17: "He who cleaves to the Lord is one spirit." As it is said elsewhere of man and wife that they two are one flesh, so, the Apostle implies, a spiritual unity no less real and close in its far higher sphere is established by saving faith between a man and his Redeemer. It is a union that lasts as the other does not, and has effects the other can never have. Again, there is the ever recurrent form "in Christ," with its converse "Christ in you"; both to be found now and then almost within the limits of a single verse. How the words "in Christ" stretch through all time! How they cover not the present merely, but eternity before and after! We were chosen "in Him" before the foundation of the world; we are made to sit with God in heavenly places "in Christ"; and all in order that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness towards us "in Christ Jesus"<sup>5</sup> The *locus classicus* is of course Galatians ii. 20: "I am crucified with Christ; no longer do I live; Christ liveth in me," where the very breathlessness of the verse betrays the pent-up feeling with which St. Paul wrote it. We can hear the triumph in his voice. He feels as if he had lost his old self, and all but changed his identity. There has been the importation of another's personality into him; the life, the will of Christ has taken over what was once in sheer antagonism to it, and replaced the power of sin by the forces of a divine life. As an old writer quaintly

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<sup>5</sup> Eph. i. 4, ii. 6, 7.

puts it: "If any one should come to Paul's doors and ask, Who lives here? he would answer, In this body of mine lives not Saul of Tarsus, but Jesus Christ."<sup>6</sup> What he was had ceased to be, and what remained had a better right to Christ's name than his own. No doubt the verse was written at a white heat; no doubt the Apostle, if he had been cross-examined, would have admitted that he did not mean, after all, that Christ and Paul were so utterly identical as now to be indistinguishable; but this implies only that language has broken down under an intolerable strain, and that words which at their best must always be general are insufficient to express a fact that has no real parallel or analogy anywhere. It is one thing to assert that a given formula exactly coincides with the reality it represents; this no one would claim even for a Pauline expression in any connexion whatever. It is another thing to hold that a given formula looks in the direction of absolute truth, and *is infinitely nearer to that truth than its negation would be*; and this, surely, we may claim here for these passionate apostolic words.

A full discussion of St. Paul's conception of union with Christ, however, would virtually mean the detailed treatment of his entire system of doctrine. His whole

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Luther, in his exposition of the passage: "Thou art so entirely and nearly joined to Christ, that He and thou art made as it were one person. . . . As touching my natural life I am dead, and now I live another life. I live not now as Paul, but Paul is dead. Who is it then that liveth? The Christian."

view of Redemption is implicitly present in it. It is a spiritual union; a mutual appropriation and interpenetration of spirit by spirit. The bond between them is sufficiently powerful to support the assignation of the same predicates to both. Our solidarity with Christ is such that in His death we also die; in His grave we are buried; with the Risen Lord, and in Him, we too rise to newness of life. Nor can an attentive reader fail to notice that St. Paul's greatest words on the subject of Atonement occur in this connexion. Romans viii. 1 is typical: "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." By faith we have made Christ's death for sin our own, our old man being crucified with Him; the law therefore has lost its rights over us, for he that hath died is justified from sin. If the conception can be put more clearly still, this is done in 2 Corinthians v. 14: "We thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died." The sentence of death, executed on the Head, takes effect *eo ipso* on the members, not by a legal transference of *rôle*, but in virtue of a personal incorporation. In such a form of words more than substitution is implied, though there is a hint of substitution also in the statement that "one died *for* all." It was His death primarily, theirs only in Him, and through the mediation of faith. The believer, in the familiar phrase, has an interest in Christ's death because he has an interest in Christ Himself, and has so lived himself by faith into Christ's personal being that old things have passed away and all things—including and centring in his old self—have be-

come new. I think most students of the Pauline theology would concede that, wherever its circumference may be, its very heart is here.

St. John, to whom it was given to speak the last and deepest word on the great Christian certainties, repeats still more convincingly the assertion that union with Christ is the secret of redemption. "This doctrine of a mystical union," says Mr. Ernest Scott, "in which the higher life flows uninterruptedly from Christ to the believer, contains the central and characteristic thought of the Fourth Gospel."<sup>7</sup> It is true that Mr. Scott proceeds to argue that a totally unethical and realistic factor enters into the Johannine conception. 144 Metaphysical categories, in his opinion, have ousted the moral and religious categories of earlier Christian thought, or at all events relegated them to a secondary place, all possibility of man's participating in the Divine life being foreclosed until the very constitution of his nature has been radically changed by the infusion of the higher essence present in Christ. But I feel it to be very difficult, if not quite impossible, to reconcile this view with the emphasis which the Evangelist uniformly lays on faith. Clearly the experience of abiding in Christ is represented as conditioned by "believing," not in the sense of acquiescence in a prescribed dogma, but as trust in a living Person. This is obviously the conception which pervades the First Epistle of St. John;

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<sup>7</sup> *The Fourth Gospel*, p. 289.



there, union with Christ is the result, as well as the basis and foundation, of ethical and spiritual experiences. It is relative to personal apprehension of the "word of life"; "if that which ye heard from the beginning abide in you, ye also shall abide in the Son and in the Father" (ii. 24). So too in the Gospel it is through "belief" in the sense of spiritual apprehension and self-committal that the impartation of the life which resides in Christ is mediated to His people. As Bernhard Weiss has expressed it: "The object in which the believer sinks himself when abiding in His words . . . always is just Christ Himself."<sup>8</sup> The crowning proof, indeed, that it is a mistake to interpret St. John's symbolic phrases in a literal or realistic sense is the fact that these very phrases, or their equivalents, are used freely by every powerful religious writer to this day, not least by those—like Mr. Scott himself<sup>9</sup>—to whom the realistic view is abhorrent.

The images by which St. John expresses union with Christ are familiar to every one. Christ is the Vine, in which His followers are engrafted as living branches. 145  
He is the Bread of Life by eating which they live for ever. Just as in St. Paul, the mystic union is contemplated alternately from either side, and can be described equally by the phrases "ye in Me" and "I in you." The former appears to mean that the Christian's life is rooted

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<sup>8</sup> *Der johanneische Lehrbegriff*, p. 78.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *op. cit.* p. 294.

in Christ and has in Him its encompassing vital element and medium; the second that He Himself is present in His people as the living centre, the animating principle, of their inmost being. Now in all such passages we feel that the distinction between Christology and soteriology, never more than provisional anyhow, has simply disappeared. Christ is definable as the Person who can thus be our inward Life, while on the other hand it is because He is this Person that His relation to us can be of this interior kind. Personality and possession mutually condition each other. To sustain this unparalleled relation to men, to impart Himself to them so that they have Him within and can hold fellowship with Him as with their own souls—this is a capacity or act which we can only interpret as specifically Divine. Not only so; the fellowship thus established with Christ is in express terms set forth as being intrinsically, and purely in itself, fellowship with God. To have the Son is to have the Father also. Precisely identical phrases are employed, in the Gospel and the First Epistle, to signify our relations to God and Christ respectively. In both cases a mutual inherence is affirmed, mediated in each case by the trustful acceptance of "His word."<sup>10</sup> The fact that Christ is thus felt to sustain a relation of indwelling in unnumbered souls, to which their indwelling in Him corresponds, points to the real argument for the higher being of Christ which we feel to be implicit in the New

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<sup>10</sup> St. John xv. 7, 10; 1 John iii. 24.

Testament as a whole.

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Turning now to the doctrinal bearing of this great conception, I should like to put forward the plea that Union to Christ is the fundamental idea in the theory of redemption. It is from this centre alone, as it seems to me, that we can interpret luminously all the problems which gather round justification and sanctification, and which have so often been construed in a way that sacrificed either the moral or the religious interests at stake. The mystic union is the pivotal and organizing fact. If we start from the experimental certainty of coalescence between the Redeemer and the redeemed, we can understand some things about the Christian life, and its relation to God, which, at least to me, would otherwise remain darkly inscrutable. I do not mean that they cease to be mysteries, but only that they are no longer merely mysteries. Light penetrates them at least a certain way. We can draw lines of interpretation which go so far, and even if we soon have to stop, we can perceive that the lines have a real tendency to converge, and therefore may be presumed to meet somewhere, even if it be beyond our range.

But before we attempt to illustrate the centrality of Union with Christ in the theological scheme, there are two questions of a preliminary kind to be considered. We have already touched on one of these. First, what is meant by the term "mystical," and is it legitimate to define it in contrast with "moral"? Now, as we have seen, no experience is possible to man which gets

above ethics, which has not an ethical content or is not fraught with ethical issues. In Professor Denney's words: "When two persons, two moral natures, are to enter into union with each other, then their union, no matter how intimate and profound it may be, must at the same time be personal and moral. . . . We must not forget that personality lives only in a moral world, and that its most intense and passionate experiences are moral to the core."<sup>11</sup> But while this is so, I think there are certain aspects of Union with Christ which are insufficiently described by the epithet "moral," and which many people have dimly in their minds when they still hanker after the word "mystical." In the first place, they feel that the Union in which they are personally identified with Christ is far and beyond anything they have experienced in their relations to fellow-men. To the term "moral" there always seems to cling a certain externality; it appears to describe and regulate affairs between persons that after all are separate, each possessing the solid rights of independent being, which in many cases it is their duty to assert and enforce. Somehow in our relation to Christ that separateness has disappeared; things happen as if it were no longer there. I do not say it is non-existent, or that there may not be varying degrees of it; but I do say that great saints, who were also great theologians, have felt that language which spoke of its absence was far truer than

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<sup>11</sup> EXPOSITOR, Feb. 1904, p. 156.

language which assumed its presence. Hence, while even in our relations to Christ our experiences remain ethical, in the sense that it would never be right to call them unethical, yet they are also more than ethical; they are religious. Between the parts of a living body there are always physical and chemical relations, and these the presence of life does not abrogate; yet a rapidly growing number of biologists would also hold that vital interrelations are the highest of all, because they take up the rest into a richer unity, not by destruction or suppression but by transmutation. This analogy may help us believe that there is a real sense in which we may say that Union with Christ is more than moral. It is the experience, or the fact, in which morality, carried up into its highest and purest form, passes beyond itself.

And this is one aspect of the truth, I think, which many 148  
have tried to express by the word "mystic."

The second aspect is very much akin to the first. Those who plead for the word "mystic," and are dissatisfied with the word "moral," feel, I think, whether consciously or not, that to describe Union with Christ as moral, and no more, makes no provision, or only a quite insufficient one, for the fundamental truth that the Union is initiated on *His* side and sustained at every point by *His* power. It is a commonplace of the preacher that our hope lies not in our hold of Christ, but in His hold of us; but is it not just in such certainties, familiar as the sunshine though they be, that the power and glory of the Christian gospel dwells? Are we really to

say that our connexion with Christ consists in, and is exhausted by, the conscious feelings and motives which pass through our minds; that if I get up some morning with my soul dead and my gratitude dumb, with faith so darkened that I cannot utter a sincere prayer, my relation to Christ is, for the time being, at an end? By all means let us beware of construing personal religion in mechanical terms, or of speaking as if the life of God could be passed into the human soul like a stream of electric force; but do not let us forget that a man is more than his conscious thoughts and feelings, though certainly what he is depends to an indefinite extent on what his conscious thoughts and feelings have been. Not a few passages in the New Testament suggest that regeneration makes a man Christ's in a deeper fashion than he himself may ever dream. "We know not what to pray for as we ought," says the Apostle, "but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered"; the suggested truth being, apparently, that in the Christian there is a Divine presence other than, and yet one with, his own consciousness, a larger and fuller indwelling of the Spirit of Christ than he himself may as yet have awakened to. So again in the great Colossian passage: "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." I do not like to introduce at this point the idea of "the subliminal consciousness," or categorically to suggest that it supplies a sphere within the personal life to which the indwelling of Christ may be assigned; for

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"the subliminal consciousness," as to which our information is so largely hypothetical, threatens to become rather a nuisance to those who care for clear thinking, and is already populous with unsolved mysteries. At the same time, I think it is worth while looking in that direction; provided we make it clear that the presence of Christ in our life at all, and therefore also in that hidden region of personality, is always mediated by conscious ethical motives on our side.<sup>12</sup> But, however this problem may finally be solved, at all events the fact that Christ can and does breathe His life into us, taking the first step in this true miracle of a communication of spiritual life, "is one aspect of the whole fact which the term "mystic" is chosen to indicate rather than the term "moral."

It may be, of course, that our conception of personality must be revised before we can make much in a philosophical way of a fact like the mystic union; indeed, some of the most suggestive writers on these topics have begun to point quite clearly towards something of the kind. We are far away now from the point of

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<sup>12</sup> To say that Christ dwells in the buried life of the soul is not in any sense to discount the spiritual character of our relation to Him. For that buried life also receives its quality from what goes on in consciousness. It is indeed the permanent deposit of conscious processes. Just as the "underworld" in a bad man is likewise bad, because his conscious thoughts and feelings are, and have been, bad; so the "underworld" or subliminal self in a believer is pervaded by Christ because he has turned to Christ in conscious faith and love.

view of Strauss when he wrote that "Personality is that selfhood which shuts itself up against everything else, thereby excluding it from itself."<sup>13</sup> This may be called the adamantine theory of personality; the world of persons, it implies, is best illustrated by a number of marbles in a box, as to which the truest thing we can say is that each of them is utterly and completely outside its neighbour. But thinkers like Dr. Moberly and Professor Lofthouse have outlined a theory which, *primâ facie*, does more justice to the actual experiences of life. "Personality, in fact," writes Professor Lofthouse, "is not exclusive but inclusive. We are persons, that is to say, not by our power of self-isolation, but by our power of transcending that isolation and linking ourselves to others, and others to ourselves."<sup>14</sup> We all know the lines of Matthew Arnold, with their touch of divine despair:

Yes! in the sea of life enisled,  
With echoing straits between us thrown,  
Dotting the shoreless watery wild,  
We mortal millions live *alone*.<sup>15</sup>

But is that the whole truth? Is it even the best part of the truth? I do not doubt that those who have tasted the sacred joys of that human love which is our best analogue to religious communion, will feel that impenetrable solitude of spirit is not the deepest thing in us. On

<sup>13</sup> *Die christl. Glaubenslehre*, i. p. 504.

<sup>14</sup> *Ethics and Atonement*, p. 117.

<sup>15</sup> *To Marguerite—continued*.



the contrary, it is possible, in some real degree, to escape from ourselves, and mingle in love and thought and will in the lives of others. And if, as Lotze has so impressively argued, personality in us is incomplete, and exists perfectly in God only, may we not say that this self-communicating power which we possess only in part will have its perfection and fulness in Him, and therefore also in Christ who is God apprehensible by us? 151 And since this interpenetration, if it is real at all, is reciprocal, may we not find that it is only an extension of principles already implied in our social existence as human beings when we go on to speak of a true solidarity of life, a spiritual coalescence, between Christ and His people?

It is of no slight importance to bring out clearly the fact that the Union we are speaking of is, as I have just said, a Union between Christ *and His people*. For various writers, like Erskine of Linlathen and Maurice in a past generation, and Dr. Moberly in our own, have asserted rather a Union between Christ and the race. As Maurice unequivocally puts it: "The truth is that every man is in Christ . . . except He were joined to Christ he could not think, breathe, live a single hour."<sup>16</sup> And in the same way Moberly dwells on "this mutual inherence, this spiritual indwelling, whereby humankind is summed anew, and included, in Christ."<sup>17</sup> Is this the

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<sup>16</sup> *Life and Letters*, vol. i., p. 156.

<sup>17</sup> *Atonement and Personality*, p. 90.

teaching of the New Testament? No one would say that it is Johannine, and careful exegesis seems to prove that just as little it is Pauline. Can it be maintained seriously that when St. Paul wrote, "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," he meant that there is now no condemnation for any man? But, apart from this, to say that the race is in Christ is to say something that has no relation to experience. One can understand what is meant by a Christ who is vitally one with believers; for this is interpreted to us by first-hand acquaintance with the Christian life, and the psychological coefficients involved in it can be pointed out. But if we refuse to depersonalize Christ, or to think away the ethical qualities revealed in His career on earth, the statement that He is vitally one with all men, even a Caesar Borgia, becomes, I submit, quite unintelligible. The tendency of such a view, in short, is to bring salvation down to the level of a natural process. We are in Christ just as our bodies are in the atmosphere, and in either case we may undergo the specific effects of the encompassing medium without knowing it. Can salvation be kept spiritual on such terms? Are ethical experiences, are faith and love, of so little value that it matters nothing to redemption whether they enter into it or not? One feels that there is something wrong somewhere; and in the minds of those who resort to these more sweeping and universal expressions a consciousness of this seems at times to stir faintly. This is shown by the qualifications which are sure, in the long run, to be inserted

somewhere. All men are one with Christ, it is said, at least ideally, or implicitly, or potentially. But when we scrutinize these adverbs closely, it turns out that what they mean is not that men are in Christ simply in virtue of their being men, but only that so far as God's will of love is concerned, or their own constitution, there is no reason at all why through faith they should not be in Christ. It is worth while to note, ere we leave this point, that to deny that all men are in Christ is not the same thing as saying that they have no relation to Him at all.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> I mean that "in Christ" is a New Testament phrase, with a quite clearly defined significance. It denotes that any one who can be spoken of as being "in Christ" is saved in virtue of that union. This is what the expression implies properly, as a designation of the believer's self-consciousness; and in accordance with the right usage of words it ought not to be wasted on any lower idea. It ought not to be natural to those who take their religion from the New Testament to say that—in the right sense of the words—a man who hates or despises the Cross is nevertheless "in Christ." But to insist on this truth is not to lift man as such away from any and every relation to the Exalted Lord. Though a man may resent the very thought of it, Christ is still seeking him, blessing him, gathering round him all the appealing influences of the Kingdom of God on earth. And from that universality of living power and sufficiency, which resides in Christ always—yesterday, to-day and for ever—may spring up at any moment the spiritual redemptive relationship of personal indwelling. This seems to be truer to the facts of New Testament religion and personal experience than to say that all men are in Christ by birth, and continue to be in Him unless they definitely thrust themselves out by unbelief. On the bearing of this problem on the question of Conditional Immortality I express no

In conclusion, a few words may be said upon the centrality of the mystic union in the organism of Christian doctrine.

1. As to the Atonement. The difficulty that has always counted for most here has been the difficulty of perceiving how the expiatory suffering of one person could benefit, or avail for, any other. And if Christ were just one more human individual, as separate from us as we are from each other, this objection undoubtedly would be fatal, alike from the standpoint of logic and morality. But if, with St. Paul, we refuse to think of Christ as one isolated person, and the Christian as another, then the representative action of Christ in His sacrifice becomes quite another thing. The union, just because it is a union, has two sides. His self-identification with us involves consequences for Him, and it involves consequences for us. I venture to quote, as the best statement known to me of this point of view, a few sentences from a recent sermon by Dr. W. M. Macgregor. "Jesus," he writes, "who sought in all things to be one with His brethren, emboldens us to seek in faith for oneness with Himself; and in virtue of that mystical union our pardon is secured. As He associated Himself with us, so we associate ourselves with Him both in His doing and in His suffering. We make His confession ours; the homage due to the righteous will of God, which we cannot render of ourselves, we find in Him. We have no desire to

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opinion.

stand apart, living out our lives in ways of our own; we wish to be found in Him, and judged only in relation to Him."<sup>19</sup> The false step in many theories of Atonement, I feel, is that they first abstract the Christian from Christ, and then find it hard, naturally, to put them back into such a oneness that what He did and is affects our relation to God. But if all Christian theology, by its very nature, is an interpretation of believing experience from the inside, oneness with Christ is our *punctum stans*, and the attempt to put it in abeyance is illegitimate. We do not have to prove it, or to make a doctrine of the Atonement apart from it; we assume it rather, and seek to draw out its implications for the sinner. 154

2. As to Christian morality. "The ethics of the Sermon on the Mount," said the late Dr. Dale, "have their root in the mystical relations between Christ and His people."<sup>20</sup> If we have forgiveness in Christ, we have also holiness in Him. We cannot join ourselves to Him by faith, so admitting Him to heart and life, without thereby receiving into our being the germ and principle of perfection.<sup>21</sup> The moral resources of life are now in Christ. This is an experimental truth, against

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<sup>19</sup> *Jesus Christ the Son of God*, pp. 74-5. Cf. Luther (*ut supra*): "Thou mayst boldly say, I am now one with Christ, that is to say, Christ's righteousness, victory and life are mine. And again, Christ may say, I am that sinner, that is, his sins and his death are mine, because he is united and joined unto me, and I unto him."

<sup>20</sup> *Fellowship with Christ*, p. 12.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Simpson, *Fact of Christ*, p. 163 f.—a noble passage.

which the argument of this or that man that he does not have any such experience has no cogency. Men do pass out of themselves to make the will of Christ theirs and their will His; having died with Him they also live with Him. In Him they share the relationship of sons of God, and are supported in the struggle with self and evil by His sympathy and communion. They share, they really share, His conflict and His triumph. Not only is it true that the law of life that is in Christ Jesus makes them free from the law of sin and death, but they partake in His service to the world. As members of His body they are His hands and His feet, doing His will for men.

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3. As to the truth of the Christian Gospel. The consciousness of union with Christ—a fact as real as the consciousness of right and wrong—is the greatest apologetic asset of the Church. It is unaffected by controversies as to the date or authorship of documents, though it has a very direct bearing on the question of the truth of their message. It is unaffected by differences of doctrinal interpretation. And as we look around us, in the society of believers in Jesus, and mark the beauty and devotion of character displayed in thousands of His people, it is the mere instinct of truth to say, “We know that He is alive from the dead, for He lives in them.”

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